Nov 1, 1903

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Eph. 3 – 17 to 19.

This day in the calendar of the Church is called the festival of "All saints." So opulent has the Church become in the possession of lives thought worthy of special commemoration that the Christian year has not suffice to remember them all by name; and so, apparently, one day was set apart to ~~celebrate~~ altogether celebrate the memory of ~~all~~ those who had been ~~who have been raised by reason of their~~ ~~had raised them to this~~ heroic virtues, to this ~~of~~ all saintly rank.

It may not be unprofitable for us at this time to consider for a little what true saintliness is; and what is our debt

to that quality of human life in the past. With us, in ordinary speech, a saint is any unusually good person. Especially we apply the name, as a title of honor, to great purity or unselfishness. The word however has a certain technical meaning in religious phraseology.

In later Christian history it has been reserved for those who were formally adjudged, by an ecclesiastical tribunal, to stand first and highest among the Christian host in oneness to God and Christ. The duly canonized Saints of the Church of Rome have now become a mighty host; and setting aside the questionable stories of miracle in which many of their lives are dressed, they furnish a splendid array of noble, loving, self-sacrificing deeds.

In the writings of St. Paul still a different shade of meaning is attached to the word; for he applies it to all true followers of Christ. The whole body of the then small and relatively feeble Christian Church he called "saints". It was

a general term by which he designated those who had accepted the new Gospel, as distinguished from all the world beside. Obviously his definition of the word would differ somewhat from ours; for he neither denied great beauty of life to many outside the Christian fold, nor was he blind to the moral defects of some of his own converts.

If he called the members of his new household of faith "saints," it was not because in his sight they had all attained to greater holiness than other men could boast, but because he discerned in them a quality of life ~~in them~~ which gave promise of something fuller than could be elsewhere found.

To enter into St. Paul's thought we must have regard to certain orders and classes of human life, as distinct from each other as (for example) different species of trees; so that a member of the fuller order, though still weak, and undeveloped, and immature, might still be spoken of possessing the higher rank.

We might have a fruit tree in our garden which as yet had borne no harvest; but if we knew that it belonged to a superior variety, we should cherish it more, and labor harder for its development, than to increase the fertility of another tree which never could produce the same kind of fruit.

Surely we must agree that much the same difference exists in men, so far as our knowledge enables us to judge, Musically, intellectually, morally and spiritually considered, human nature may be divided into certain classes; and we should be perfectly certain that the members of a lower group could never attain, or reach, the proficiency made possible to the members of a higher group class

Let it be a question of music for instance, Then an ordinary gift for the practice of the art, of so much significance that it is for one looking there gifts, wholly impossible, by means of any amount of labor and culture, looking there gifts,

to make a first class musician. If the mental and physical make up of these unmusical people could be changed; to give them another voice, or to open within them new capacities of feeling, they might aspire to the highest musical career.

Now it was the belief of St. Paul that the followers of Christ in his day were morally and spiritually filled, like no men else, for the highest things. They might not have attained, but it was in them to attain what none others could hope to reach. Therefore he called them "saints;" and assigned them a rank above any the proudest that the world could elsewhere show.

And this belief in the mind of this great Apostle had foundations which it should be interesting and instructive for us to know. It was not only that the Gospel had attracted to itself, out of the multitudes of men, those who possessed the ~~highest~~ finest spiritual gifts, but the gospel acceptance of ~~Christ~~, in his regard, meant such a change of heart; such a putting off of

the old man, and putting on of the new man in Christ, as might raise the lowest, at once, to highest spiritual ~~state~~ place.

The fact that they had committed themselves to follow, and try to imitate, the most perfect example ever given to men, made of them a class superior to all others in St. Paul's esteem. ~~To him~~ For him the whole world, in all its treasures of sacred history ~~held~~ otherwhere no such pattern of human excellence as had been given in the life of Christ. They who had pledged themselves to try their conduct by that standard, and to live, so far as they might be able, by the law of Christ, were therefore in a road by themselves; in a way ~~that~~ that led ultimately to higher ends than others had set before them.

But more than this, St. Paul called the followers of his Lord and Master "saints" because, as he affirmed, they possessed powers of Godliness to which the world had not before attained.

We must not try to follow his thought in close detail, but he believed and taught that through faith in Christ, the soul had come into such relations with God that a new divine power and principle had entered into its being, to render it capable, where otherwise it would be incapable, of following in the footsteps of Christ.

Upon this ~~He~~ members of that order of life established by Christ. The Holy Spirit had been poured out in ~~new~~ ~~and~~ more abundant measure, and the effect of this spirit was not only to produce signs and wonders but to reinforce and strengthen the human will, in such wise as to make that will, ~~if it were not itself~~ ~~if it was strong~~ ~~in some sense~~ invincible against wrong.

Stated ~~this~~ in its briefest outline, with regard to this subject we set out to consider, this religious philosophy of St. Paul was this: God had been present in the life of all races of men, and had never left himself without a witness in any time or place. But He had at last spoken through

the life of Jesus Christ as never before, and in him had made a revelation of the perfect life, transcending all other examples of the beauty of holiness. The effect of this revelation in the lives of men was threefold. It gave them new light upon their pathway; a new vision to follow; a new law to obey. And also it gave them new power to rise and follow this new master of the things of the Spirit; to press forward new strength toward the mark of their high calling.

Because they had seen a new picture of the moral possibilities of human nature, and had formed a new alliance with the power of God for the carrying out of higher spiritual purposes, therefore St. Paul called the followers of Christ "saints," and he undoubtedly believed that however they might fall, for the time being, below their ideal, it was for them to reach, at last, heights of the spirit that none others could hope to find, save by coming into the path upon which they had entered.

Now if we attempt to criticise this Pauline philosophy, as we would deal with the

thought of any other great man in history, perhaps we may say that he depended too much upon the mind's formal attachment to a definite kind of social order; to what we should call "church membership".

It was the fixed idea of his race that all Israelites were to be saved because they were sons of Abraham; and it may be that St. Paul had conceived of the new kingdom of heaven among men, as another such company of chosen people, all of whom by virtue of this standing in this select congregation of souls, were to be carried on to immortal perfection and bliss.

If he so thought he had neglected to give due and explicit word of his Master, which shatters all such dreams. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit." The saintly mind and soul, the heart born for spiritual communion, and for lofty exhibitions

of ~~their~~ devotion to love and duty. will appear here and there, in the life of the world, - as great souls rise up from time to time. But there is no route or class to which they can be confined.

No organization ~~on this earth~~ can be made up of a race of saints; no process is known ~~in this~~ among men whereby any sinner may be surely converted ~~into a saint~~ saintly ways. For this reason the pretence of churchmen to hold the keys of heaven and hell is demonstrably absurd. Heaven is the home of saintliness. It is for those who have made some progress at least in acquiring the virtues and graces of the spiritual life.

Many people quite outside the recognized Christian fold are as good saints as any numbered with the chosen flock; and ~~so also~~ many nominal christians would find themselves very much out of place in a society of the purified and redeemed. The birth of the spirit does not lie under human control, and the routes and classes in which human souls must arrange themselves ~~or by~~ at last

their own specific gravity, are not to be settled by any ecclesiastical decree.

However, we could not rightly charge St. Paul with the arrogance and bigotry which churchmen have sometimes displayed! and it is not a great matter if he rather overrated the moral capacity of some of his converts: There would be small cause for reproving to a possible weakness in his thought of this kind, were it not for the purpose of clearing away all suspicion that Christian loyalty means intolerance toward other forms of religious faith.

Not for one moment would this great Apostle to the Gentiles have maintained that Jew or Greek, by reason of spiritual infirmity was outside the pale of the Divine regard. — Not-when, it may be, would he have said that the men and women who listened to his teaching were, individually, better and purer than many about them, who still held by the old pagan faith.

It would have said that these Christians
had entered into a better spiritual inheritance;
that it was their own fault if their righteousness
did not exceed that of others in the world
surrounding them; and that, in course of time, the
fruit of the Christian tree must in the nature of things be of
the higher and better sort.

This is the claim that may still be made,
on grounds which the writings of St. Paul
clearly state; and we are not to be accused
of injustice towards other great religions, in thus
asserting the superiority of our own.

So far as the supreme excellence of the
moral example given in Christ is concerned
there is not much use of argument. Either
one sees, or one does not see, that this
life surpasses all other as an illustration of ideal
human excellence; and we may leave that question to
the moral discernment of our race.

But on the other point set forth in

the Pauline writings, as a support for Christian
Sainthness, something like proof can still be addduced

The giving of the Holy Spirit in this our day, to
those who profess Christian discipleship, is, as it is true
distinct outward of new power to live the holy
life, as it appears to have been in Apostolic times.
The Bishop's hand is still laid upon the head of
one who comes to enroll himself as a soldier of Jesus
Christ; but no visible or recognizable change is
produced by this ceremony.

Yet it is true that there is a spirit of
Christian faith, by whose might the hearts of men
are armed for life conflict, as they can be
strengthened in no other way: and the evidence on
which this assertion rests we may confidently commend
to any dispassionate mind.

There are to-day many people who disclaim
all conscious indebtedness to Christianity. but who
are fighting bravely against the evils that do much
hamper the world's life. If we ask these people what
is the faith in which they fight, we shall find them
professing, in one form or another, a deep

persuasion of the goodness of God. We have perhaps listened to public teachers, ~~who~~ upon whose lips the name of Christ is seldom or never heard, but who preach, with great eloquence and fervor, a doctrine of the divine love which carries help to many fainting hearts. Suppose we ~~ask~~ demand of these teachers when they learned this faith, and how they can be so sure that an infinite goodness overshadows the ways of men! Whatever they may say in reply, I myself can see but one source from which this confidence springs. It comes from the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

Ethical culture, so-called, though it disavows allegiance to any personal authority, does but proclaim over again the Ethical Gospel of Christ, and, for one, I cannot believe that it would ever have found just this word in its heart, to speak, except that Christ has put it there.

Men do not learn ~~this~~ truth that an eternal love is round about them from study of this outward world; and few of them, at least, have learned it from the study of philosophy. They may say that they get it from the depths of

their own ~~minds~~ minds, but we shall discover that only those ~~hearts~~ minds which have received the inheritance of Christian training, or which have been brought in close contact with Christian ~~truth~~ influences, have this faith hidden among ~~the~~ those dark springs whence thought and feeling ~~come~~ arise.

The truth is, I take it, that the Author of our Christian faith has been more on effective teacher of the fatherhood of God. They who are to-day echoing his words and teachings, as if they had come into possession of some universal, scientific faith, wholly independent of all special names, are, if they did but know it, living in the light of a truth which mainly rests at last upon the witness of Jesus Christ; and which would not be here at all, as a guide and inspiration of souls, save that he has been behind his report.

~~But what is the end we may see, that~~
~~Christ having made this discovery, and given it~~
~~to the world, that we should now enjoy~~
~~to take it upon his authority!~~

What has transpired is the partial fulfilment, in the great life of the world, of St. Paul's prayer for those to whom he spoke; that Christ has dwelt in the hearts of men by faith; and they, being thus rooted and grounded in love, have begun to comprehend as the world's closest bond of sympathy and union with an infinite mind, so have they been filled with spiritual life and power, as from the fullness of God.

Then cannot be in any other fashion. Such alliance established between the human spirit and the divine spirit, as is made possible to one who accepts the teachings of Christ. It is the possession of kinship between God and man, which enables the weak human heart to put itself entirely into a heavenly Father's keeping, and to obey that Father's almost command.

The devout Hebrew could say, "the Lord is my shepherd", and find in that saying boundless peace and rest. But in this thought is no suggestion that the loved and guarded sheep have any part in the life and purpose of the shepherd's mind. Many a beautiful

pagan spirit, giving itself in highest and most chivalrous devotion to a superior will, has turned to God as its King, and served Him with the last gasp of energy to be commanded by the human will. But such service has been rendered as by a lowly soldier, who never might come face to face with his resplendent general and King.

There are indeed lofty strains of human life; yet is there something higher and mightier on life's battle field; when the christian ~~human~~ heart clothed with stands forth to fight against wrong, ~~singing~~, power from on high, in addition to its own. "Singing, This is my Father's Kingdom, in which thieves and murderers can have no place." There is a consciousness of right to exorcise earth's demons; a certainty of victory for him who wields the sword of the Spirit, ~~belonging to christian faith~~, such as the Master himself displayed when with a whip of ~~small~~ cords, the mere semblance of physical force he drove the money changers from the Temple; which consciousness and certainty are the distinction badge and sign of a Christian ~~saintliness~~ saint.

It may be asked why, when so many have learned from Christ the great Truth of the Fatherhood of God, they should continue to feel and recognize their dependence upon him. The discovery of this truth, truly we ought not to exaggerate that need, and we should be glad to give full measure of praise, to the virtue and heroism of all non-christian souls, yet should we not forget his saying, "I am the vine, ye are the branches, except ye abide in me ye cannot bring forth much fruit."

The fact is that he is, so exclusively, the author and teacher, of a faith so precious to mankind as life itself, that the question of his right to teach this truth is absolutely fundamental to the world's higher spiritual welfare; and we are obliged to come back from many a pleasant dream to consider, in deepest earnestness of spirit, who and what he was that he should have produced this great effect upon the world's belief.

Experience may give us some warrant that his words are true; and as his leadership is

hold in him to come, so will confidence in his divine mission to human hearts increase. But still, to large extent, certain priceless things are lost in the estimation of men, if lost at all, because he said them; ~~and for this reason~~ it is impossible to get far away from him, and still keeping the faith he taught.

To him do we go for words of eternal life; and he, dwelling in our hearts by faith is the great exemplar, and inspirer of courage, of hope, and constancy, in our strivings toward the blessedness of an everlasting home.